

Six counties join first "La Protectora" Fiestas during National Hispanic Heritage Month to promote traffic safety awareness

Staff Reports

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety/La Protectora Program announced today they are joining with other federal, state and local highway safety and law enforcement officials across the state, to remind everyone who plans on using alcohol during National Hispanic Heritage Months' festivities this year to act responsibly by designating a sober driver, wearing safety belts, and using child safety seats while traveling.

"In Arizona, motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death for Latinos aged 1 to 44," said Cecilia Lerma, coordinator of the La Protectora Program. "If you notice a friend showing signs of impairment, take their keys. Don't let them get behind the wheel. Also, refuse to travel with others who do not wear safety belts or use child safety seats. Objects and unrestrained bodies inside vehicles can also cause deaths and serious injuries to everyone inside the vehicle."

Although Latinos represent 18 percent of the population in Arizona, they account for 32 percent of fatalities and serious injuries. Whenever alcohol, low safety belt and child safety seat usage is involved in driving, the result is always tragic.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), there is a disproportionate representation of deaths within the Latino population. The La Protectora Program is designed to reduce these numbers by providing traffic safety education to Arizona's Latino community.

During National Hispanic Heritage Month, in an effort to reach the community, La Protectora will join events in six coun-

ties. The cities, dates, times, and locations are:

Tolleson
Sept. 20
9 a.m. - Noon
Veterans Park

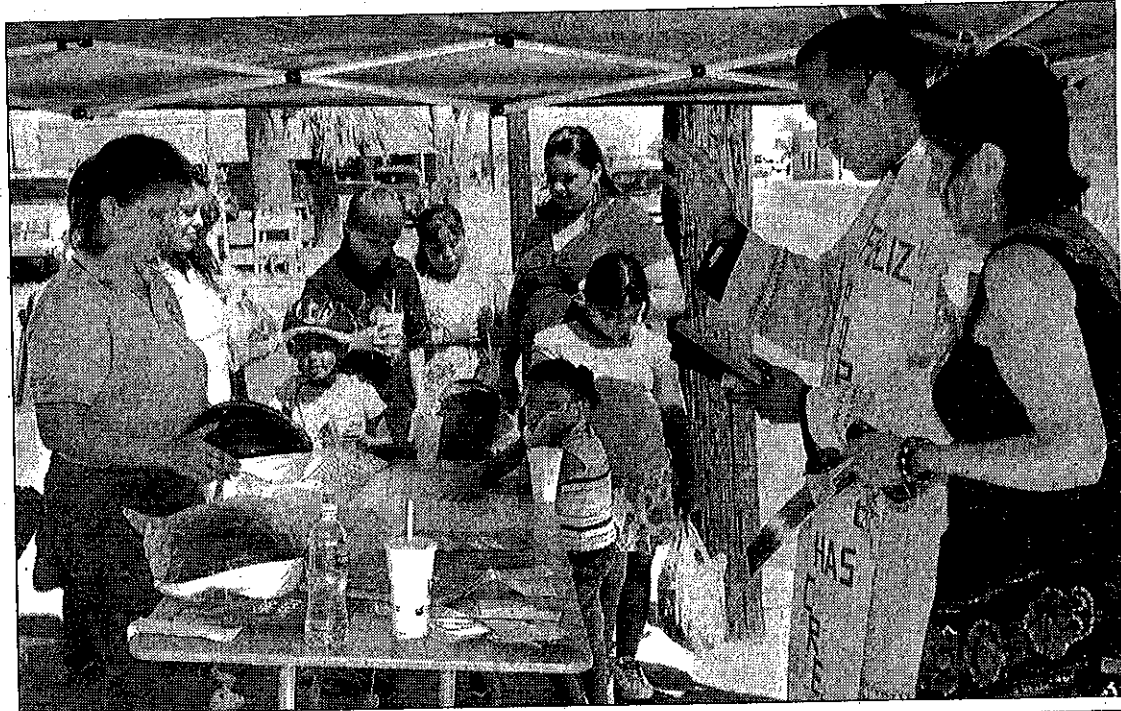
Douglas

Sept. 27
9 a.m. - Noon
Castro Park

Rio Rico
Oct. 04
9 a.m. - Noon
Rio Rico Community Center

Tucson
Oct. 11
9 a.m. - Noon
Irvington/6th Ave. (El Rio)

San Luis
Oct. 18
9 a.m. - Noon



Staff photos by Lindsey Gemme

TOP: On Saturday, Father Juan Carlos Aguilre of St. Helen's Church in Eloy blesses helmets being given to local youths to keep them safe on the roads. Fiestas Coordinator Marie Lorona, right, looks on. **RIGHT:** A member of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety fits 4-year-old Ruby Hood with her new helmet at the La Protectora Program during the Eloy Fiestas.

